

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AS

SUBJECT: ELECTORAL POT CONTINUES TO BOIL; SNAP
ELECTIONS IN STATE OF QUEENSLAND

REF: A) CANBERRA 6898; B) MELBOURNE 1228

1. ELECTORAL POT CONTINUES TO BOIL AND GIVES EVERY PROMISE OF CONTINUING AT HIGH TEMPERATURE FOR MONTHS TO COME. HOWEVER, WITH ANNOUNCEMENT OCT 23 OF SNAP ELECTIONS IN STATE OF QUEENSLAND, STATISTICAL POSSIBILITY OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS BEFORE END OF YEAR HAS VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED. MEANWHILE, RELATIONS BETWEEN PARTIES IN FEDERAL PARLIAMENT CONTINUE TO BE POOR, WITH INTERRUPTIONS AND SHOUTING MATCHES FREQUENT. IN-FIGHTING BETWEEN LABOR GOVERNMENT AND ACTU IS GETTING WORSE. (REF B). THIS IS AN ELECTIONS ATMOSPHERE, EVEN THOUGH NATIONAL ELECTIONS ARE NOT PRESENTLY IN SIGHT.

2. PREMIER BJELKE-PETERSEN OF QUEENSLAND ANNOUNCED OCT 23 THAT STATE ELECTIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY WOULD BE HELD DEC 7. LAST STATE ELECTIONS HELD IN MAY, 1972, AND NEED NOT HAVE BEEN HELD TILL MAY, 1975. HOWEVER, BJELKE-PETERSEN, STATING THAT "PEOPLE OF QUEENSLAND AND AUSTRALIA ARE FED UP TO THEIR NECKS" WITH FEDERAL

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LABOR GOVERNMENT, TOOK ADVANTAGE OF DETERIORATING ELEC-

TORAL POSITION OF ALP, BOTH NATIONALLY AND IN STATE, TO ANNOUNCE EARLY ELECTIONS. QUEENSLAND HAS ABOUT ONE MILLION REGISTERED VOTERS, AND THESE ELECTIONS WILL INEVITABLY BE REGARDED AS PORTENT OF NATIONAL TRENDS. STATE ELECTIONS ARE NOT ALWAYS SURE GUIDES TO NATIONAL ELECTIONS, PARTICULARLY IN STATE SUCH AS QUEENSLAND, WITH ITS LARGE AND DISCONTENTED RURAL POPULATION.

3. IN PRESENT QUEENSLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY BJELKE-PETERSEN'S NATIONAL-LIBERAL COALITION HAS 47 SEATS OUT OF TOTAL 82, WITH NATIONAL PARTY (FORMERLY NAMED QUEENSLAND BRANCH OF COUNTRY PARTY) HOLDING 26 SEATS AND LIBERALS HOLDING 21. ALP OPPOSITION HAS 33 SEATS, AND THERE ARE TWO OTHERS (DISSIDENT LABOR AND INDEPENDENT). OUR CONSUL IN BRISBANE COMMENTS THAT BJELKE-PETERSEN HOPES TO CAPITALIZE ON VULNERABLE POSITION OF ALP AND WILL PROBABLY IMPROVE COALITION MAJORITY, THOUGH FIVE SEAT LOSS BY LABOR WOULD BE REGARDED AS VERY LARGE. HOWEVER, HE NOTES THAT SOME PESSIMISTIC ALP OBSERVERS IN QUEENSLAND BELIEVE LABOR LOSS COULD BE UP TO 10 SEATS.

4. COMMENTING: COMING AFTER POOR PERFORMANCE BY LABOR IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES, ACT, AND NORTHERN TERRITORY (REF A), EXPECTED DECLINE IN LABOR SUPPORT IN QUEENSLAND IN DEC 7 ELECTIONS WILL FURTHER UNDERLINE TREND THAT PUBLIC OPINION POLLS HAVE SHOWN SINCE LAST JULY.

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